

IMPRESSION: a characteristic, trait, or feature resulting from some influence, a telling image impressed on the senses or the mind



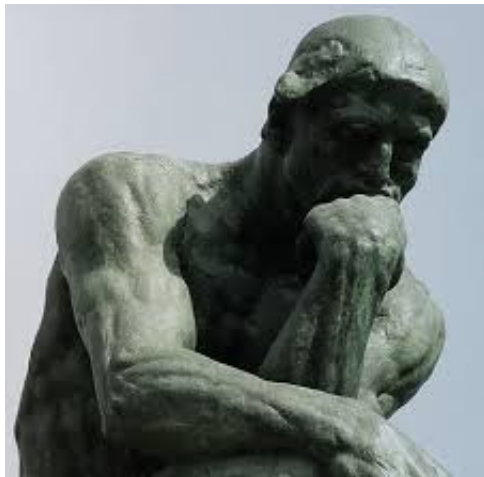
It's time for positive

CHANGE

Have you fed your brain lately?

The importance of continuous learning

UXL, September 2013



As children, we are constantly learning—new words, new behaviors, how to read, how to properly interact with others, how to safely cross a street. We expect learning to be a part of our daily lives (and it usually is). That constant learning continues all the way into our teens and through college. We may not necessarily use all the tidbits we learn (when was the last time you used the quadratic equation? Or needed to know when the Magna Carta was signed?), but the act of learning makes our minds nimble and adaptable. In other words, we learn *how* to learn and that knowledge helps us to quickly adjust to new situations and face unfamiliar problems.

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 Forward



from the
UXL BLOG

Did you catch last month's newsletter? It was all about Learning Agility and becoming adaptable in an ever-changing world. This month's blogs continue that theme. Read July's newsletter [HERE](#).

**Your Career Path,
One Step at a Time**

But what happens after we complete school? What happens when we are no longer held accountable for our daily learning?

Sadly, many of us let our minds languish and our education fall by the wayside. We become comfortable in our routines and stop challenging ourselves to stretch beyond our comfort zones. When, for instance, was the last time you read a book for pleasure? Statistics show that 42% of people never pick up another book after graduating from college. That is unfortunate, yes, but why should you care? What does continuous learning have to do with your career or your well-being? Probably more than you think...

The Importance of Continuous Learning

In our fast-paced and constantly evolving world, none of us can afford to remain stagnant in our knowledge. Technology, business systems, and global markets are changing from year-to-year and it is up to us to either adapt and keep up with the times or merely coast by and hope that we don't get washed away by the intensity of change. As Joyce E.A. Russell from the Washington Post writes, "With today's more complex business environment, learning is not just a nice thing to do — it is essential for staying on top of things. Especially during times of recession, it is important for people to learn new skills and enhance their marketability."

Learning is an ongoing process. It is never "complete" or "finished." Even if you think you know all there is to know about your particular career, there is always *something* you can learn or improve upon. Sometimes, we need to stretch ourselves beyond our current job duties in order to find opportunities to learn. If that's the case, then do so! If your company has a branch in Tokyo, why not attempt to learn Japanese? If you work with a particular computer software program, why not take the time to learn about a competitor's software? By taking initiative and delving into new territory, you are making yourself a more desirable employee *and* you're keeping your mind dexterous and quick.



The idea that our careers are linear progressions is pretty deeply embedded in our society. We still assume, despite the rapidly-changing job environment, that our work will steadily move "up" in salary, stature and social impact. Then, when it doesn't, we become discontent. How can we rethink our career paths? More [HERE](#).

Are We Hooked On Our Devices?



Phones and social media can take us out of our present moment, and too much time online can negatively distort your perception of yourself as well as take away from the amazing world right in front of you. What do you think? [Read the post](#) and

As I mentioned before, it is important to continue learning to keep up with current industry trends and to weather changes in the market. Those may seem like broad, impersonal reasons for expanding your knowledge, but there are also several personal, more intimate reasons you should keep your mind active. For one, active learning helps to build self-confidence and enhance job performance. When you take the time to learn, you're building your knowledge base (whether directly related to your career or not) and you're actively engaging your mind. An active mind is better able to solve problems and generate solutions, thus leading to greater self-confidence and personal belief. As an added bonus, when you're confident in yourself and your abilities, others will be more likely to have confidence in you as well.

Learning Every Day (How-To)

Taking the time to learn every day may seem like a daunting task, but it really doesn't have to be. The best thing to do is approach your continuing education with a plan. What is it you would most like to learn about? How can you do that? What are the steps you need to take to increase your knowledge in a specific subject area?

If, for instance, you would like to learn more about marketing through social media, set some goals for yourself and then figure out how to accomplish those goals. Maybe you decide to listen to one social media-related podcast every day. Or maybe you decide to devote an hour every day to researching a specific social media platform (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Tumblr...). Maybe you really delve in and take a class or workshop. By being consistent and mindful of your learning, it will eventually become habitual to make an effort to learn every day.

If you're still wary of taking up the "learning challenge," keep in mind that learning does not necessarily involve reading a book or manual, taking a class, or spending the afternoon in a webinar (although all of these options are wonderful and valid learning tools). Rather, learning

weigh in!

Learning Agility: Diving in Even When You're Scared



Even though screwing up might be hard on your ego, it will increase the rate at which you learn and respond in unique situations. So, take chances! More on how to face your fear of the unknown [HERE](#).



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can be as simple as having coffee with a co-worker. If there is someone in the office you've always looked up to, or if there is someone who is knowledgeable in an area you'd like to learn more about, ask them for a few minutes of their time. Sit down with them and learn more about the work they do and how they developed their expertise in a particular area. At the very least, you'll find out a little more about that person and *that* is knowledge in itself.

Remember to keep your eyes open and your mind engaged. You never know when a learning opportunity might present itself. Whether you observe someone using Excel in a new, innovative way or you notice a co-worker's effective writing style, don't be afraid to talk to people about their skills and talents. Ask questions. Find out what others are doing in the office that might help grow your own skill set. An office should be like a school in some ways: A nurturing, creative environment where people are not afraid to learn from each other and strive for growth.

In Sum

Whether you choose to pick up a new hobby or sport, learn a new skill, take a class, or find a mentor or guide who can pass along his/her knowledge, you are doing yourself a favor. You're taking the time to invest in your mind and your well-being. You're also making yourself into a more well-rounded, adaptable employee (an employee that anyone would love to hire or promote!). By continuously learning, you demonstrate that you are not adverse to change and not satisfied with simply doing your job. Instead, you are someone who is willing to take on challenges, explore new territory, and continue to grow. Doesn't that sound like someone *you'd* like to employ?

Happy learning!



Margaret Smith

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Margaret Smith believes in the strength of your organization.

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